

Evaluation of Teaching Attitude Patterns of Malaysian Academics

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ABSTRACT

Evaluation of teaching by students is a common practice in higher education in advanced countries. Its primary goal is the improvement of teaching. The objectives of this study are to (a) determine whether Malaysian academics agree to be evaluated by students; (b) gauge their attitude towards student evaluation and detect whether resistance exists among them against student evaluation of teaching; and (c) relate their attitude with selected demographic and situational variables. Subjects for the study comprised 495 Malaysian academic staff from the seven universities. The instrument for the study consisted of 34 five-point Likert-scale items designed to gauge attitude towards teaching and also items that sought information on the conduct of teaching evaluation. The results showed 84% of respondents agreed to student evaluation. There was no difference in attitude among lecturers of different universities or of different academic ranks or of different genders. Academic administrators seemed to be more positive towards evaluation of teaching. Respondents who were more agreeable to be evaluated and those who reflect more on their teaching were found to be more positive towards teaching evaluation.

ABSTRAK

Penilaian pengajaran oleh pelajar di peringkat pengajian tinggi bukanlah gejala baru di negara maju. Tujuan utamanya ialah untuk memperbaiki pengajaran. Kajian ini dijalankan untuk (a) menentukan sama ada tenaga akademik di Malaysia bersetuju dengan penilaian pengajaran oleh pelajar; (b) mengukur sikap mereka terhadap penilaian pengajaran oleh pelajar dan mengesan sama ada terdapat tentangan tentang amalan ini; dan (c) menghubungkan sikap tersebut dengan beberapa angkubah demografi dan situasi terpilih. Subjek bagi kajian ini terdiri daripada 495 orang kaki tangan akademik dari tujuh buah universiti di Malaysia. Alat kajian terdiri daripada 34 item lima-mata jenis-Likert yang digubal untuk mengukur sikap terhadap penilaian pengajaran. Alat ini juga mengandungi item-item

yang berkaitan dengan maklumat mengenai penilaian pengajaran. Keputusan kajian menunjukkan 84% daripada responden bersetuju dengan penilaian pengajaran. Tidak terdapat perbezaan sikap bagi tenaga akademik dari ketujuh buah universiti dan dari kategori pensyarah yang berbeza atau mengikut jantina. Pentadbir akademik mempunyai sikap yang lebih positif terhadap penilaian pengajaran. Tenaga akademik yang lebih bersetuju untuk dinilai dan mereka yang merenung kembali tentang pengajaran mereka didapati lebih bersikap positif terhadap penilaian pengajaran.

In Malaysia, there is a growing concern among lecturers and university administrators alike, that there should be evaluation of teaching by students. Some universities, e.g. Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) and Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) have already prepared standardised teaching evaluation forms for their academic staff. In other universities that have yet to prepare and use standardised evaluation forms, there are lecturers who on their own initiative, conduct teaching evaluation for their personal feedback.

The objectives of this paper are to (1) determine whether Malaysian academics agree that teaching be objectively evaluated; and (2) gauge the attitudes of Malaysian academics towards student evaluation of teaching and detect whether resistance exists against student evaluation of teaching among them; and (3) relate their attitude with selected demographic and situational variables to see if attitudes differ by categories of these variables.

By "objectively evaluated" we mean that the process of evaluation is done by a person or persons who are exposed to the teaching of the lecturer in a classroom setting for an extended period as to able to observe directly and judge the effectiveness of the lecturer. The evaluation must also make use of a structured instrument previously tested for its validity.

Evaluation is an integral part of teaching and learning; it may be viewed as a product as well as a process in education. As a product, evaluation is viewed in terms of performance or achievement of students in the form of grades or marks obtained in a test or examination. As a process, evaluation involves procedure for obtaining information or data on students' performance or achievement in those tests or examinations. The information obtained is then used to form judgments, which in turn are to be used in decision making by the lecturer or his superiors, or both.

If evaluation is an integral part of teaching and learning, it implies both lecturer and student involvement. In the past, when one spoke of evaluation, the focus was on the student. However, there is now a noticeable shift in the focus of evaluation from student to lecturer, although there is no reduction in evaluation of the former.

The issue of teaching evaluation is related to lecturer effectiveness. When universities implement teaching evaluation, two major considerations often feature prominently: first, to help academic staff examine their teaching for the purpose of improving it; secondly, to aid those in authority to make decisions regarding confirmation (tenure), promotion, awards, and annual salary adjustments (Braskamp et al. 1984)

This brings us to the question of who should be the best people to evaluate teaching? Evaluation of teaching can be done in a number of ways; it can be done by the lecturer himself/herself through self-appraisal, or by peers and colleagues, or by the students.

Self-appraisal may take the form of one's own written appraisals about one's own teaching performance or by using a standardised questionnaire. Whether this can be done objectively is, of course, an open question. Probably it has little merit if the evaluation is for tenure or promotion.

Colleagues include faculty peers, departmental administrators (head of department or dean) and professional staff responsible for faculty development who have the necessary expertise in the discipline of the lecturer being evaluated are in an excellent position to judge. This may take the form of teaching observation and review of classroom materials. Students as sources of teaching evaluation provide an important and unique perspective, since they are the primary recipients of instruction or consumers of knowledge.

Students are considered appropriate sources when it comes to describing or judging student-lecturer relationship, views of lecturer's professional and ethical behaviour, their course workload, what they have learned in the course, fairness of grading, and lecturer's ability to communicate clearly.

Information from students can be collected in several ways, such as rating scales, written appraisals, interviews and students achievement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on evaluation of university teaching had been described in the *Second Handbook of Research on Teaching* (Travers 1973). In Wittrock's (1986) *Third Handbook of Research on Teaching*, greater emphasis is given to the evaluation of courses and teaching. There is increased concern with students' and lecturer's views of the educational process.

The literature has identified two major reasons for evaluating teaching, namely, to improve teaching effectiveness and knowledge about teaching, and to use the information obtained about a person's teaching skills for certification, or in decisions concerning promotion. The

role of teaching evaluation in the improvement of one's teaching performance has been well accepted by academia. However, there exists some controversy over the use of results of teaching evaluation for administrative purpose, such as confirmation or promotion (see, e.g., Derry 1979).

In countries like the United Kingdom, university lecturers are now more supportive of the idea of using teaching performance as a criterion for promotion. This same idea, however, was opposed in the sixties when it was first suggested and implemented. Some of their comments sound like this: "How can the students know what's good for them?" or "Only an expert in the field can assess a lecture course." Such comments only reflect the vulnerability of lecturers who become defensive, aggressive and rigid (Heim 1976).

In the USA, faculty involvement in the evaluation of teaching from colleagues has given way to greater use of student ratings. For example, Ongley (1975) found that some students praised highly a conscientious faculty member who covered the course content thoroughly in well-planned lectures, while others looked for originality and provision of information which was not readily accessible, preferring that basic information should be obtained in private study.

In a study at the University of Western Ontario on faculty attitude towards evaluation of teaching by different groups of people, viz., peers, graduate students and undergraduate students, Murray (1982) reported that faculty members felt that the feedback obtained from it was not effective in improving their teaching. However, they were favourable towards student evaluation of teaching and were quite optimistic that a satisfactory evaluation system was possible. In an earlier report, Blank (1978) cited results of studies that were conducted between 1968 and 1972 by the American Council on Education, which showed the increase in support of student evaluation of teaching among university academics. In the 1968 survey, 59 percent of faculty members supported the use of student evaluation in promotion decisions, and in the later study of 1972, 69 percent supported student evaluation of teaching. In his 1978 study, Blank also reported that the majority of his respondents were positive towards student evaluation of teaching as a criterion for promotion.

In another study involving more than 50 academic departments, conducted over a period of six years at the UCLA, a great majority (80%) of the faculty members in that study said that student ratings were useful for improving their courses and quality of their teaching (Marsh 1982). Apart from agreeing to student evaluation of their teaching, there was also evidence of strong support for colleague evaluation and colleague observation of teaching (Dienst 1981).

The present paper is not concerned with what students think of good lecturers, nor what academics consider as reasons for evaluating teaching.

Rather, it is an attempt to describe and explain attitudes of academics towards teaching evaluation in Malaysian universities. Can they accept it? How do the different categories of academics view the idea of teaching evaluation?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Attitude may be explained in terms of social learning theory or cognitive theory. According to the social learning theory (Bandura 1963), attitude is a product of socialization, through the process of learning of conditioning or a result of simple reward and punishment. Through the process of socialization, many social values and attitudes are acquired from the various agents of socialization such as family, peer group, teachers and colleagues at place of work.

According to the theory of attitude formation based on cognitive consistency theory, attitude is a function of perception (positive or negative) towards an entity (Heider 1967). This entity may be in the form of another person, an object, an idea or event.

In this study, the authors are interested to explain attitude towards student evaluation of teaching based on selected background variables such as gender, university where one is teaching, whether one is holding administrative post or not, academic rank and lecturers' qualification. Two perception explanatory variables are agreement to being evaluated and habit of reflecting on teaching.

Academic administrators are expected to have more positive attitude towards teaching evaluation, because the information obtained from teaching evaluation would provide them with a more objective method of reporting lecturers' teaching performance. In terms lecturers' qualification, it is also expected that those with masters degree would be more supportive of teaching evaluation because a great majority of them are involved more in teaching rather than research. If they ever do research, it is more likely that they are just research members in a research team. It is also anticipated that there would be variations in attitude according to academic rank. As far as the professors are concerned, there is no further academic promotion for them. It is therefore expected that they would resist least compared to associate professors and ordinary lecturers. The great majority of ordinary lecturers fall into the younger age category and are not PhD holders. It is foreseen that the ordinary lecturers would welcome any implementation of evaluation of teaching, compared to associate professors.

It is also anticipated that lecturers who admit agreement to evaluation of teaching to be more positively disposed than those who state otherwise.

It is also hypothesised that those who say they reflect often on their teaching are willing to improve their teaching, and that they foresee the information from student feedback to be useful to them.

METHODOLOGY

Since the interest in this study is on attitude of Malaysian academics towards evaluation of teaching (DV) and how it is related with some demographic and situational variables (IV), the DV attitude requires some operationalization. This calls for a brief discussion of its measurement and, hence, the instrumentation.

INSTRUMENTATION

Pilot Study A pilot study was conducted on a stratified random sample of 20 Universiti Pertanian Malaysia academic staff in January, 1991. The instrument used was an earlier version of the one finally used (briefly described in the next section.) The purpose of the pilot study was mainly to pretest the instrument to check on content validity. No reliability test was conducted because the sample was too small for the purpose.

Questionnaire Construction Before the pilot study, in November 1990, we solicited attitude items from 114 fellow academics at Universiti Pertanian Malaysia. We asked them to list three positive statements about teaching evaluation and three negative ones. A total of 163 positive statements and 167 negative ones were received (with many overlapping ones). Based on these responses, we constructed a questionnaire incorporating only relevant items suggested by these academics.

The questionnaire also sought other information: whether the respondents conduct any student evaluation of their teaching and, if so, for what purpose, whether they agree that their teaching be evaluated (both for teaching improvement and career advancement), what methods they consider most appropriate in evaluating teaching, what they consider as effective teaching, what their attitudes are towards student evaluation of teaching, and whether they feel that their present position is due to their ability to teach well. Data were also gathered on the demographic and job variables of the respondents – their sex, age, academic rank, academic discipline, highest academic qualification, length of tertiary-level teaching experience, normal teaching load, normal size of class taught, etc.

Measurement of Attitude As for the attitude part, which is our central concern, the instrument carried thirty-four 5-point Likert-scale items (17

positive and 17 negative), designed to gauge attitude of lecturers towards evaluation of their teaching. Many of these items were those solicited from fellow academics at the Universiti Pertanian Malaysia, Serdang, as alluded to earlier, and also from the literature review.

The statements cover several areas: attitude towards student evaluation; assertion that teaching evaluation be used for purposes of staff promotion; confidence in students' ability to evaluate their lecturers' teaching, towards diagnostic role of evaluation, etc. Examples of six of the items are given below with their direction (+ or -) indicated in parentheses:

1. Student ratings of teaching should not be used to make decisions about lecturers' promotion or confirmation in service. (-)
2. Being consumers of education, students are the best people to judge good teaching. (+)
3. Student ratings are not always helpful to lecturers who want to improve their teaching. (-)
4. I shall gladly allow my teaching to be evaluated by students if required by my university for whatever purpose. (+)
5. I would rather not be promoted than allow my teaching be evaluated by students. (-)
6. Student ratings provide useful feedback to the university to enable it to raise its standard. (+)

In our opinion, these representative items and the rest of the 34 statements express attitude towards student evaluation of teaching; positive statements are indicated by the (+) sign, and negative statements by negative signs (-) above.

Scoring of Attitude Items Each response to the 34 attitude statements is scored as follows: In the case of a positive statement (e.g. "I shall gladly allow my teaching to be evaluated by students if required by my university for whatever purpose"), "Strongly Agree" is assigned a score of +2; "Agree" a score of +1; "Disagree" a score of -1; and "Strongly Disagree" a score of -2. For a negative statement (e.g. "Student ratings of teaching should not be used to make decisions about lecturers' promotion or confirmation in service"), the scoring is reversed: "Strongly Agree" is scored -2, and so forth. These scores are then summated for each respondent. Since we have 34 statements, the summated scores can theoretically range from a most negative value of -68 to the most positive score of +68. This is our dependent variable of interest – attitude towards student evaluation of teaching.

DATA

Data for the study came from 495 Malaysian university lecturers, who were chosen through systematic sampling from the seven Malaysian universities. Standard mail questionnaires were administered in February, 1991, to the sample through local university representatives, one from each campus.

ANALYSIS

Data were entered into the desktop computer via dBase IV (database management package) and processed by both the dBase IV as well as SPSS/PC+ (v.3). All 34 attitude statements were subjected to the Cronbach's reliability test before further statistical analysis. The Cronbach Alpha computed for the 34 statements was 0.92, which indicates very high reliability of the summated scale constructed. The composite attitude score was then subjected to various statistical analyses, ranging from descriptive statistics, frequency distribution, and cross-tabulation. Crosstabulation was used to test whether there are attitude patterns according to the various IV's. The Chi-square test was used to test hypotheses of association.

The t-test and ANOVA were used to test for differences in the mean attitude scores of the various categories of respondents being compared (e.g. male vs. female, or among the three ranks: Lecturer, Assoc. Professor, and Professor).

RESULTS

PROFILE

Our sample of Malaysian academics consists of 377 males (76%) and 118 females; 52% of the males are PhD-degree holders. Of the female lecturers, 42% have PhD's. Over 26% of the respondents hold some administrative posts in the university (head of department, deputy dean, etc.), including 15 women. The sample consists of 27 Professors (5.4%), 129 Associate Professors (26.1%) and 339 Lecturers (68.5%).

AGREEING TO BE EVALUATED BY STUDENTS

On whether teaching evaluation should be practised for purposes of promotion in the university service, 84.4% agree that it should (47% agree strongly); whereas only about 6% disagree with the idea, and 9% are undecided. Seven academics do not give any opinion (two AP's and seven Lecturers).

The next question we probe pertains to method of teaching evaluation most preferred by academics. More than one choice was allowed. The most popular choice is "student evaluation" (49%), followed by "panel of experts" (31%), "peer or colleague" (17%), "head of department" (8%), "other" (3%) and "Dean" (2%). The percentage sums to more 100% because of the multiple answers. By far, the most popular combination is "students + experts" to evaluate teaching (20 respondents). However, the majority want only evaluation by students. Of the 207 respondents who opt for student evaluation, 179 of them (86%) want only students to evaluate teaching, and no other people. Thus, the confidence placed by these academics on student ability to assess teaching effectiveness is evident. There is therefore no strong resistance by these academics to the idea of asking students to evaluate teaching.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS STUDENT EVALUATION OF TEACHING

Based on the scoring procedure, we get an overall mean attitude score of +17, implying a positive disposition towards student evaluation of teaching, with a standard deviation of 18.2, thus reflecting great variability in this dependent variable.

As mentioned earlier, an academic's summated attitude score could, in theory, lie anywhere between -68 and +68. Descriptive statistical analysis, however, shows that the attitude scores for the sample ranged from -39 to +66. A negative score implies negative attitude towards teaching evaluation, while a positive score suggests positive disposition towards the object.

Table 1 shows the distribution of attitude scores (divided into seven classes) according to university. The overall modal class for this unimodal distribution is 23-38. Six universities, excluding Universiti Malaya, have their modes within this class also; UM's mode lies in the 7-22 score class. The UTM has the widest spread of attitude scores – from the most negative class (-39 to -24) to the most positive (54 and above). The International Islamic University (UIA), which is a small sample of 29, has rather concentrated attitude scores, being confined only to the middle four classes, with no individuals in the first two negative classes. In fact, over half (55%) of the respondents from the UIA are in the modal class of 23-38.

The mean (17) and median (approx. 18) are enclosed within the 7-22 interval, i.e., they are lower than the mode (exactly 26) which is bounded by the next score interval (23-38). The distribution is therefore concentrated at values higher than the mean; in fact, 271 of the 495 (54.7%) respondents scored higher than the mean. The results imply that the academics in the sample are very positive towards evaluation of

university teaching. Based on Table 1, no more than 30% of them hold negative views.

TABLE 1. Distribution of Academics' Attitude Scores by University

Attitude Score	University							Row Total
	UPM	UKM	UM	USM	UTM	UUM	UIA	
	C o l u m n P c t							
(39)-(24)*	1.6	1.2	2.0	1.0	2.7	0	0	1.4
(23)-(10)	7.9	9.5	9.8	6.9	6.8	3.4	0	7.3
(9)-6	25.2	20.2	19.6	23.8	23.0	17.2	10.3	21.8
7 - 22	25.2	25.0	31.4	29.7	23.0	27.6	20.7	26.3
23 - 38	26.0	32.1	27.5	30.7	28.4	41.4	55.2	31.1
39 - 54	14.2	11.9	7.8	5.9	12.2	6.9	13.8	10.7
54 or more	0	0	2.0	2.0	4.1	3.4	0	1.4
N	127	84	51	101	74	29	29	495

* : parentheses denote negative scores. Classification: Not Signif.

ATTITUDE ACCORDING TO UNIVERSITY

Results of the ANOVA did not show mean attitude scores to be significantly different from one university to another. The mean attitude score of each university was, however, positive all round, with UIA having the highest mean attitude score (26.1, $n = 29$) and UPM with the lowest mean attitude score (15.2, $n = 127$). Mean attitude scores and their standard deviations by university are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Descriptive Statistics of Attitude Score by University

University	Mean	Std. Dev.	Cases
UPM	15.19	19.55	127
UKM	16.09	18.69	84
UM	15.98	19.00	51
USM	16.40	17.28	101
UTM	17.37	22.70	74
UUM	21.20	17.21	29
UIA	26.13	12.44	29
Overall	16.99	18.20	495

ATTITUDE OF MALES VS FEMALES

Results of the t-test showed that the mean attitude score for the male lecturers was 17.1, while that for female stood at 16.5, giving a very low t-value (0.108). Thus, male and female academics do not display significant difference in their attitude towards teaching evaluation.

ATTITUDE OF ADMINISTRATORS VS NON-ADMINISTRATORS

University academics may or may not hold administrative posts besides their substantive academic appointment; those who do, may be made heads of departments, deputy deans or deans of faculties or directors of centres. When analysed by administrative status as mentioned above, the mean attitude score for administrators was higher (21.3) than for non-administrators (15.4) (Table 3). Results of the t-test gave a t-value of 2.41 and significant at $p < 0.01$. Administrators are, therefore, more inclined towards teaching evaluation than non-administrators.

TABLE 3. Attitude of Administrators vs Non-administrators Towards Teaching Evaluation

Administrative Status	Mean	Std Dev	Cases
Administrators	20.44	16.95	129
Non-administrators	15.77	18.81	366
Total	16.99	18.20	495

One duty of academic administrators is to write annual “performance” reports of their academic staff, including teaching ability. This is a difficult area for most administrators since, traditionally, this evaluation has been very subjective. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that these administrators would welcome any effort to evaluate teaching objectively, thereby relieving them of the arduous task. This finding is similar to that of Seldin (1975). According to Seldin, there is a significant increase in the use of student rating among academic deans in some liberal arts colleges in the US, on the evaluation of teaching performance. The information obtained from student rating of teaching is very useful for academic deans and this might explain why they have a more positive attitude towards evaluation of teaching than the non-administrators.

ATTITUDE AND AGREEMENT TO EVALUATION

Recall that a great majority (84%) of our respondents said they would support a more objective evaluation of teaching in promotion exercises of academic staff; only 6% of them did not agree to be evaluated in their

TABLE 4. Attitude Score by Categories of Agreement to Evaluation

Agreement to Evaluation	Mean Attitude Score	Std Dev	No. of Cases	Pct.
Strongly Agree	25.20	17.48	230	47.1
Agree	13.67	16.22	182	37.3
Undecided	4.36	12.71	47	9.6
Disagree	1.59	20.62	22	4.5
Strongly Disagree	-11.00	24.88	7	1.4
Total	17.31	18.87	488	99.9

TABLE 5. Attitude Scores by Category of Agreement to Teaching Evaluation

Attitude Score	Agreeing to Teaching Evaluation						Row
	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total	
Column Pct							
(39)-(24)*	0.9	0.5	0	9.1	14.3#	1.2	
(23)-(10)	2.2	8.8	10.6	18.2	57.1	7.0	
(9)-6	12.6	24.7	46.8	36.4	14.3	21.5	
7 - 22	24.3	30.2	36.2	9.1	0	26.6	
23 - 38	36.5	33.5	6.4	22.7	0	31.4	
39 - 54	20.4	2.2	0	4.5	14.3	10.9	
54 or more	3.0	0	0	0	0	1.4	
N	230	182	47	22	7	488	

Chi-square: 154.11; d.f. = 24 Signif. = .0000 ($p < .01$)

* :parentheses denote negative scores.

: Only one person involved (column total is only 7).

TABLE 6. Relationship between Attitude towards Evaluation and Habit of Reflecting

Reflect	MeanStd	Dev	Cases
Very Often	19.69	19.46	244
Often	14.83	17.98	210
Sometimes	10.69	19.95	26
Never	5.00	7.07	2
Total	17.02	18.84	482

teaching, while the remaining 10% were uncertain (Table 4). It is reasonable to expect that those who support teaching evaluation will have a more positive attitude score based on the 34 items mentioned earlier. Our data support this hypothesis: the higher the degree of support, the higher is the composite attitude score.

Mean attitude score for each category of response to whether they support teaching evaluation is shown in Table 4. Results of the ANOVA of attitude scores for the five categories of response gave a large F-value of 31.25 which was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

When we crosstabulate attitude scores against category of agreement to teaching evaluation, we also see strong statistical association between the two variables (Table 5). Among those who "strongly agree" to evaluate their teaching, only 3% have strictly negative attitude scores (minus 10 or less), while 84% have strictly positive scores (plus 7 or more).

In the "agree" class, 9% have strictly negative attitude scores, and 66% have strictly positive scores. Interestingly, for the "undecided" group, nearly half (47%) have attitude scores enclosed in the "uncertain" interval whose scores range from -9 to +6. However, 43% of them have very positive attitude towards teaching evaluation. Less than 11% of the "undecided" group have strictly negative scores (minus 10 or less).

For the "disagree" categories (combining the two - "disagree" and "strongly disagree"), only a few of them have expressed positive attitude.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTITUDE TOWARDS TEACHING EVALUATION AND HABIT OF REFLECTING

An overwhelming majority (94%) of our respondents say they either "always" or "frequently" reflect on their own teaching or lecturing performance. It is reasonable to assume that those who reflect on their teaching will have better attitude than those who do not (Table 6). ANOVA gave an F-value of 3.82 which was significant at $p < .05$. Thus a person who reflects on his/her teaching is better disposed towards being evaluated in his/her teaching.

ATTITUDE AND LECTURERS' QUALIFICATION

The minimum academic qualification for university teaching in Malaysia is a masters' degree. However, as seen earlier, more than half (52%) of our respondents are PhD holders, while 42% are masters degree holders and 6% hold professional qualification as their highest qualification (MACPA, MRCS, etc.).

The mean attitude scores for the three categories of respondents indicate that professional qualification holders are most inclined towards

teaching evaluation (mean attitude score = 22.6), compared to masters degree holders (18.5), or to PhD holders (15.0) (Table 7). Results of the ANOVA gave an F-value of 2.82 which was significant at $p < .05$. The results tend to suggest that PhD holders are least inclined towards teaching evaluation, perhaps because they perceive research to be more important than teaching. Doctoral degrees are advanced research degrees, and their holders' attitude do reflect this attribute. However, PhD-holders are still positive towards teaching evaluation (mean score of 15, which is below the overall mean of 17).

TABLE 7. Attitude Score and Lecturers' Qualification

Academic Qualification	Mean		No. of Cases
	Attitude Score	Std Dev	
PhD	14.99	19.52	256
Masters	18.52	18.75	208
Professional	22.63	14.37	30
Total	16.99	18.93	494

* Missing value = 1

ATTITUDE AND ACADEMIC RANK

Comparison of the mean scores for three groups of academic staff showed that lecturers have the highest mean attitude score (17.3), followed by professors (16.8), and finally associate professors (16.2). However, the F-value associated with the ANOVA was very low (0.167) and therefore the differences were not statistically significant. Thus academic rank does not make a difference in the attitude towards teaching evaluation.

DISCUSSION

In this study, we find that more lecturers agree to being evaluated in their teaching by students compared to other means of evaluation. A similar finding was reported by Murray (1982).

The mean attitude score indicates a positive disposition to student evaluation of teaching, although there are variations according to university. It is concluded that the majority hold positive attitude towards student evaluation of teaching; those who are against it appear to be in the minority.

From the returned questionnaires in this study, an interesting criticism of teaching evaluation is that "asking students to evaluate lecturers is like asking the blind to lead the sighted" (three altogether). Two other

negative comments made by Malaysian academics are: "Students' evaluation is unnecessary because it is not part of university education; and students' evaluation will undermine the authority of lecturers or the very little power that they have over some lives of the students." In spite of the above arguments for not accepting students' evaluation of teaching, it is noted that Malaysian university lecturers generally are proponents of students' evaluation. This is based on the fact that only three lecturers have explicitly expressed their negative views regarding the usefulness of students' evaluation. Moreover, their criticisms are not very serious ones.

Be that as it may, those who are in favour of students' evaluation of teaching apparently have not accepted uncritically the importance and usefulness of such evaluation. To some of them, although students' evaluation of teaching is useful, it is not enough. They suggest that evaluation should also be done by colleagues/peers and heads of department, and that the feedback or results of the evaluation exercise are to be discussed on "friendly" terms and frankly in the department. They wish for evaluation of teaching to be informal and not imposed by university authority. There are also those who favour self-evaluation or evaluation by a panel of experts; and finally, they have also suggested that students' evaluation should be done by students who have graduated.

Malaysian lecturers see student evaluation as something which is subjective and sensitive, and feel that before data of the evaluation are interpreted, many factors should be considered. These include the quality of students, their ability, learning strength, maturity, motivation and expectations; but of greater significance perhaps is the number of students in the class.

The semester system and continuous assessment (that is, number of quizzes, tests, examinations), according to some lecturers, may also influence student's evaluation. They stress that the semester system does not provide students with sufficient time to internalise what is being taught and hence does not help in the intellectual maturation process of the students. Student's own failure to learn may lead them to evaluate their lecturers negatively. One may consider this point as debatable; and likewise the argument that the nature, type, level and content of courses can be another set of factors that can sway students' evaluation. A few argue that a good lecturer may be rated low if he/she teaches a boring and difficult course.

Some lecturers mention that the academic environment also plays an important role in influencing students' evaluation. Good teaching (and thus high ratings by students) can only be achieved if the lecturers are supported by adequate reading and reference materials, facilities, teaching aids and other educational infrastructure. The qualifications and the number of lecturers and their work-load have also to be considered. Some

others mention the importance of opportunities for training in teaching. However, they also commented that the lecturers themselves must have the right attitude and commitment towards teaching and towards their students. They must have leadership qualities and excellent code of conduct. They must also be able to integrate teaching with research.

Besides courses, lecturer's competency and availability and good working order of educational equipment, it is also suggested that the personality and the ethics of the lecturer be evaluated. One may feel that this is a controversial suggestion.

Finally, as regards the usefulness of students' evaluation, lecturers should make use of the feedback to improve their teaching. Those who are rated highly by students may be given some incentives, but it is not implied that student's evaluation should be used for rewards, such as tenure and promotion.

From the brief analysis, it is quite clear that Malaysian lecturers realise the usefulness of students' evaluation, but they have also indicated a number of limitations of such evaluation. Some of their fears, concerns, comments and suggestions are rather rational and valid, and therefore cannot and should not be treated lightly by those who are contemplating to introduce students' evaluation of teaching in higher education.

CONCLUSION

This study found that a great majority of respondents were positive towards student evaluation of teaching. There was no serious resistance to such evaluation. Furthermore, there was no difference in attitude among lecturers of the different universities. Male and female lecturers were found not to be different in their attitude. However, academic administrators seemed to be more inclined towards evaluation of teaching than the non-administrators.

Lecturers who were more agreeable to be evaluated had higher attitude scores. Similarly, those who reflect more on their teaching were found to be more positive towards teaching evaluation. Doctoral degree holders had lower attitude scores, although still on the positive side, than masters degree holders. There was no difference in mean attitude scores among lecturers of different academic ranks.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that student evaluation of teaching could be used as one of the several methods for evaluating academic staff for purpose of promotion or confirmation decisions. It should not be used as the only criterion for promotion or tenure. However, this should be done on a voluntary basis. Academic staff who feel that they want the student evaluation of teaching to be used

as part of personnel decision may put forward the results of their teaching evaluation by students to the university decision makers.

Secondly, the teaching evaluation form should be designed in such a way that it is applicable to different types and styles of teaching, it should be easily understood by students, and it should be related to student learning.

Results from student evaluation of teaching may also be used for the improvement of teaching skills among academics. Based on the feedback of these evaluations, universities, through their teaching and learning centres should organise workshops for those who want to upgrade their classroom teaching presentations. For those universities that are still without these centres, maybe the time has come to establish such centres.

Finally, the results of this study point to the need of further research in this area. For example, studies can be conducted on the attitude of students on their evaluation of lecturers' teaching; the validity and reliability of student evaluation of teaching; and the relationship between lecturers' attitude towards student evaluation of teaching and students' academic performance.

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